

Coalition To Save Rent Control

PRESS RELEASE

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The Newark City Council will be considering changes in the rent control law at its September 7 meeting at 1:00 P.M. Members of the ***Coalition To Save Rent Control*** and tenant leaders will be watching closely to see if the City Council votes for changes which will result in higher rents for tenants.

On August 16, members of the ***Coalition To Save Rent Control*** attended a special City Council meeting at which the proposed changes to the rent control law were presented by Geradine Smith, Director of the Rent Control Board.

Ken Lewis, a member of the Chamber of Commerce Housing Committee, which is made up of landlords and members of the Chamber of Commerce, said his group endorsed the proposals. He said the proposed changes were a "compromise" worked out between the Chamber Committee and the Rent Control Board.

A member of the ***Coalition To Save Rent Control*** spoke against 2 of the proposed changes which would increase tenants' rent:

- 1) To make tenants pay for increased sewer costs
- 2) To limit the amount that a landlord has to pay back if he overcharges a tenant.

"We think that if a landlord overcharges a tenant, he or she should pay back the full amount," said Nancy Zak. "Otherwise we are giving the landlords permission to break the law."

"Yes, the sewer costs have increased. But fuel costs and inflation are down. Tenants rents have not been decreased. The drop in these costs balances out the increase. Landlords can always apply for hardship increases."

One change which the ***Coalition To Save Rent Control*** had strongly opposed was dropped. It would have meant that all 3 and 4 family buildings were no longer covered by rent control.

"That change would have affected nearly 1/4 of all the City's tenants," said Frank Hutchins. "It would have meant a big increase in rents for thousands of people. Rents in Newark have already risen 106% from 1970 to 1980 - even with rent control! 33% of Newark's residents are living below the poverty line. Where are we supposed to go when we can't afford to pay these rent increases?"

"There should be more public notice well in advance for discussions about rent control which will affect many tenants," said Manny Tirado. "Only a few people got letters about this meeting, with only 3 days notice."

The ***Coalition To Save Rent Control*** has developed changes it would like to see passed in the rent control law. Some of these include:

- lowering the automatic yearly increase
- A 15% ceiling on hardship and capital improvement increases (as in the Orange ordinance)
- rent freeze in buildings which are not registered with the rent control board
- better proof of expenses for hardship applications

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